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NOTE ON 'SOLOMON B. JUDAH AND SOME OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES'

UNDER the above heading Dr. A. Marmorstein printed in this REVIEW (vol. VIII, 1-29) an article which included new material from the Genizah. The history of the Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fāṭimid Caliphs is not yet written. This deficiency will only be made up when the remarkable Genizah finds completely see the light of publication. Judging from the past, we shall have to wait for many a year yet till this will be an accomplished fact. Every contribution, therefore, that augments our knowledge of this obscure period of Jewish history is to be gratefully accepted. But to be of scientific value, it must, of course, adequately present the new material. Only a few have the opportunity of re-examining the originals from which this material is taken. When manuscripts are improperly used, the result is a tangle of false conceptions to unravel which is indeed an uncongenial as well as thankless task.

Working on a contribution to the history of this period, based chiefly on hitherto unpublished Genizah material, for the last three years, I had the occasion to study the fragments Dr. Marmorstein used in addition to a good many more. With a single-minded purpose of serving scientific truth, I am constrained, though with great reluctance, to make the following remarks on his paper.

1. Before dealing with Solomon b. Judah proper, Dr. Marmorstein discusses the preceding Geonim of the Palestinian school (pp. 3 ff.). The Memorial List (MS. Adler 2592), on which he bases his genealogy of the Geonim belonging to Ben-Meir's family, cannot be fully considered here. It is enough to say, that there exist three other lists about this family (Bodl. 2874²³ and 2443, discussed by Poznański, *RÉJ*, LXVI, 60 ff.; the third

in the very same MS. Adler 2592) which Dr. Marmorstein entirely overlooked. As they are all contradictory, one list cannot be chosen at random without adducing other data for its veracity. But a signature in T.-S., 13 J. 16¹⁶, Moses b. Isaac החרב הסופר b. Solomon החרב b. Meir Gaon, is the cause of a long argument whether this Solomon החרב is the famous Ben-Meir, the opponent of Sa'adya (pp. 4 ff.). The obvious, and at the same time weighty, objection (already brought forward by Poznański) that Ben-Meir, styled ר' ראש ישיבת even by his adversaries, would not be mentioned here simply as a ḥaber, i. e. one that held a diploma from the academy, does not deter Dr. Marmorstein from deciding that Solomon is *the* Ben-Meir (p. 6).

But why this superfluous arguing about a mere signature? Let us see what the fragment contains besides the signature, to whom it is addressed, if it be a letter, and who else is mentioned therein. Now it is an epistle written by Moses החרב to a highly influential elder, Abū Sa'ad b. Sahl, in request of support. The writer mentions that he is in a hurry to visit his grandfather, who is ill. Accordingly Solomon החרב was then still alive. But who is this Abū Sa'ad? From about 1025 to 1048 we find him having intimate connexions with the Fātimid court at Cairo. The Caliph az-Zāhir bought from him a beautiful Sūdānī slave, who became the mother of the next Caliph al-Mustansīr (1036-1094). The Queen-mother (Walida) wielded great power in the court, especially since 1036, when she acted as regent for her seven-year-old son. Her former Jewish master, Abū Sa'ad, had since then become a *persona grata* till he was assassinated in 1048 (see Wüstenfeld, 'Geschichte der Fatimiden-Chalifen' in *Abhandlungen der Göttingen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, vol. XXVII, Abteilung iii. 1 ff.). The Genizah has preserved several fragments bearing on this Abū Sa'ad and his brother Abū Naṣr, the sons of Sahl al-Tustari (modern Shuster in Persia), which will be published by me elsewhere.

Now is it at all likely that the Ben-Meir of 921 was still alive in Abū Sa'ad's time? The answer is, of course, in the negative. Several other data prove conclusively that Ben-Meir was succeeded

by a son, called Meir, who is the father of the above Solomon **החבר**. I can only give here the result of my investigations (to be printed elsewhere) as to the Gaonic family of Ben-Meir, viz. Moses, Meir I, Judah=Ben-Meir (921), Meir II, Abraham, Aaron, Joshiah (1015).

But, writes Dr. Marmorstein (p. 8), ‘We have further a fragment which enables us to fix the chronology of these Geonim. A letter, fragm. Adler, mentions severe persecutions in Sicily. The letter is written by **אלחין** bar Hakim to Hananiah “Ab bet din” ben **ראש הישיבה** The father’s name is missing. Hananiah is the father of Sherira, who became Gaon in the year 938/9. We assume, therefore, that Moses and his son Aaron I lived before 939.’ What this has to do with the Palestinian Geonim the reader is at a loss to find out. But, forsooth, there occurs in the fragment (without Dr. Marmorstein telling us) the name of **ראש הישיבה ריבנה** [ומרנא יאשיה]. This led Dr. Marmorstein at once to assume that Hananiah was Sherira’s father, and that ‘the head of the school’ is his supposed Gaon Joshiah I. Again the question arises, What has the scholar of Pumbedita to do with the Palestinian Gaon?

Now let us state the facts. The address (verso) reads as follows :

מן[י] א[ב]ו אלחין בר חכ[מ] נז
[ר[ב] חנניה אב]
ו[אחו]בו
ב[ית ד[ין]]
[כ[ר]]
[ה[כ]ן ר[א]ש ה[י]ש[יב]ה]
[ר[ב] ש[ל]ומ[ו]ת ל[א]ן קצ[ה]
ו[א]ל[ל]

Accordingly Hananiah was a Kohen, and his identity with Sherira’s father is out of the question. The contents of the letter (which will be printed elsewhere) are thus. Joshiah, ‘the head of the school’, wrote to Sicily requesting donations for his school. They were duly promised on a Sabbath, when the Gaon’s letter was read before the congregation in the synagogue. But before the contributions could be collected such a heavy impost was made by the government that many people were ruined. The elders of the community do not like to reply to the Gaon without enclosing some money. Abū'l-Hayy, probably the local scholar,

therefore writes to Hananiah, *the Ab of the (Palestinian) academy*, informing him of what happened, and promising to do his best for the school during the ensuing festivals. The letter is written on Rosh Hodesh Elul. This Hananiah Hakkohen was Ab under Joshiah, Gaon of Palestine in 1015, as will be shown elsewhere. Let me also add, that there is no justification whatever for Dr. Marmorstein's suggestion (pp. 13 and 15) that there were two academies in the Holy Land, one in Ramlah and the other in Jerusalem. Only the Gaon sometimes resided, instead of in the latter city, in the neighbouring Ramlah, the capital of the province of Philistia (Filastin) and the seat of the governor. This was the case with Ben-Meir, with Joshiah, and, on several occasions, with Solomon b. Judah.

2. We come at last to this Gaon. Writes Dr. Marmorstein : 'אבלה נבלה הארץ, in a fragment Adler there is a Selihah, beginning written in the year 1362 (=1051), when he was still alive (p. 14), and the years of his Gaonate were from 1025 till his death about 1052/3 (p. 16).¹ Now this Selihah (it is a loose leaf in MS. Adler 2804) has really the following beginning : (1) למא חוף[ן] רביינו שלמה (2) נאן עמל אפ[ר]ם הרה אלסליהה (3) פיאלנ贊 איר סנה אשׁבָּן (4) אבלה נבלה הארץ וכו'. 'When our master Solomon Gaon died, Ephraim composed this Selihah in the middle of Iyyar 1362 Sel.' (=1051 c. e.). The author of this elegy is most likely Ephraim b. Shemarya of Fustat. Further comments are needless.

3. 'Solomon prevented the re-establishment of the dual authority of the Palestinian Gaonate' (pp. 14-15). This Dr. Marmorstein infers from a few lines cited from MS. Adler 2804. This fragment (it is fol. 3) deals with a rival of Ephraim b. Shemarya in Fustat, and has nothing to do with a supposed opponent of the Gaon. The letter will be fully printed elsewhere. The following corrected readings of the lines cited by Dr. Marmorstein are given here. For **כל** **המינו** read **בל** **הימנו** ; **אין** **זה** **דרך** **מי** read **אין** **זה** **הריך** ; **באפספו** **אליו** read **ב[או]** **אליל** for **שمبקש** **שם** **שמות** **ואם** **למחולקת** **אין** [אנו מחו[קן] ידי בע[ל]י מ[חלוקת]

¹ The italics are mine.

Dr. Marmorstein actually left us in the middle of a sentence. (On the same page, for *השולחני* *השורחני* read, the banker.)

4. Writes Dr. Marmorstein (p. 16), 'We hear it very soon, already in Solomon's time, that people said: The former leaders always stood against the blood of their colleagues (T.-S., 13 J. 9² *vide* now *RÉJ.*, LXVIII, p. 45).' I have only to refer to my remarks in this REVIEW (vol. VII. 481), whence it is clear that Solomon b. Judah made these remarks *himself* about the spiritual leaders (*ראשים*)² in *Fustāt*, speaking also disparagingly of Elhanan (b. Shemarya). Dr. Marmorstein, who published this important letter in *RÉJ.*, entirely failed to understand its drift. The whole fragment will be reprinted by me, as it has been carelessly edited. Compare the two versions in *RÉJ.*, *l.c.*, p. 46, ll. 18–24, and in this REVIEW, p. 17, note 17. As for the latter, for *ישב בעיר קודש אוננו אום [=אלחינו אליהם]* read *אלוננו אליהם יכוננה*, *אשר בעיר קודש אוננו [=אלחינו]* *באשר [=אלחינו]* *נעשה?* The meaning is, What can be done, the name is called (i. e. I bear the title Gaon), and it is impossible to reject what our God adorned (me) with.³ These bitter words of the Gaon were due to the great pain the opponents of Ephraim b. Shemarya in *Fustāt* caused him by their letters. They accused him of siding with Ephraim, though unworthy, because of his presents; and they even threatened to denounce Solomon to the government. The corresponding lines read in the MS. (but cp. the version in *RÉJ.*, *l.c.*, 45, ll. 6–9) (read) *המלכות יונניה, [=המקום]* *כǐ רצוי רוב העם לקבול עלי על [=אל]* *כǐ הרשות איש לא ראוי וישמייך ברברים רעים המך [=המקום]* *יגבה הדין מכל מוציאא שם רע וישב עליו בדין אכזריות ויאמרו כǐ למען [=מתן] ויתיר ומישאותיך יבואך אנגרותינו להעוזר בם עליהם*. The whole epistle deals with a communal dispute in *Fustāt*. And yet Dr. Marmorstein exclaims (p. 17), 'Is it not undeniably established⁴ that the enemies wanted another man in Solomon's place, and had one ready?'

Trying to find opposition against Solomon b. Judah's Gaonate

² Both Elhanan the elder and his son Shemarya are called *הראש*, see *l.c.*, 479; VIII, 344.

³ Obviously alluding to Job 40. 10. Read therefore perhaps *העודה*.

⁴ The italics are mine.

where there is none, Dr. Marmorstein discovers (in this REVIEW, vol. VI, 161-2) a poem in MS. Adler 3363. 7, from which he copies two lines, and adduces that 'the dignity of Solomon b. Judah was fiercely attacked'. Now this fragment (it really covers ff. 8 a b and 9 a) is a copy of the well-known poem of Gabirol (another Solomon b. Judah!) in honour of his patron Ye'kutiel, already printed in Duke's *Sheh"sh*, no. 8 (p. 13), in Sachs' 16-36, and in Brody's edition, Heft I, no. 3. Needless to say that in the line וְאָמַתْ שָׁאֵלْ מַיְ הַוָּה וְהַבָּן מַיְ שָׁלְמָה בֶּן יְהוֹרָה, Gabirol speaks of himself!

5. On pp. 18-19 Dr. Marmorstein makes statements about the adversaries of Ephraim b. Shemarya, which he tries to support by quotations from fragments torn from their contexts and entirely misconstrued. In the first instance, what do the lines of T-S., 13 J. 15¹ (p. 18, note 22) mean? Solomon writes to Ephraim that prior to this letter he sent him a few lines (*שורות*) after the festivals in reply to his epistles. Therein Ephraim reported the doings of his opponent. That person held the diploma of Ḥaber (*חַבֵּר*), given by the Jerusalem school, but not satisfied with it, he exchanged it for the title Alluf of the Babylonian academy. He accordingly 'despised the waters of Shiloah to drink the waters of the Euphrates'. Solomon, naturally, maintains that this man only lost thereby, since the Palestinian degree is higher. The academy of the Holy Land is the 'alma mater' (*אַמָּת*), whereas the seat of learning in Babylon is a step-mother (*אַשְׁתָּאָבָן*). Several other fragments (to be printed elsewhere) deal with this scholar in Fustāt who changed his allegiance to the former school for the latter. The title Alluf, it can be stated with certainty, was never bestowed by the academy of Palestine, and has nothing to do with 'the history of the organization of the Palestinian Geonim' (p. 18). In note 22 for [?] *מַעֲזָה* read *מַזְעָה*, for *לִידָךְ* read *לִבְלָתְךָ*, for *מַזְעָה* read *מַזְעָה*, for *לִידָךְ* read *לִבְלָתְךָ*.

But a typical example is the following. Writes Dr. Marmorstein (p. 19), 'Furthermore, we see that he (i. e. Solomon b. Judah) asked a man, *perhaps the lay head of the community in the Diaspora*

or in Palestine, Saadya b. Israel, during his stay in Egypt,⁵ to support Ephraim with the royal authorities'. As evidence we have (note 23) the second half of T.-S., 13 J. 17¹⁷. The first half Dr. Marmorstein did not copy. But it is just there that the name Sa'adya b. Israel occurs. The correct text of the whole fragment deserves to be given here.

[T.-S., 13 J. 17¹⁷, paper, square writing, size 24.4 × 17.8 cm.]

Recto.

את אהובנו ונדרלו נוש[א]נו בב[ור]
הנשיה לצאת לא[ע] והורעת[י] כי טוב עד למאור
להשלים אליו היהות לפ[נ]י מוציא ומביא את עם יי' כי אין לפ[נ]ינו
בארץ ישראל ראיי [למ]עליה הזאת וככ[ר] ית[ק]ן הרבר בינויתנו
5 בכתבים אל ח[חבר] שצ' וביום הזה [דיברנו עם זקנינו]
כבוד קדושת מ[רנא] ורבענו סעדיוו הוקן הנכבד היק[ר]
העשה טובות וחסדים העשו נחת רוח בירושלים
אשר בית[ו] פתוח [ל]רוחה לכל בא אליו בן מר' רב' ישראל
רוח י' תניחנו לכתוב אל הדרת שרינו וסלרינו⁷ זקן בית
10 ישראל ותפארת ב[ז]ית ישראל להוריעם אהבתינו לישיא [שצ']
ותאותו לישיבתו וכי הוא ראוי לכל מעלה וכי העת נדחק
וימי המועדים קרבו ואני רוצה להיוות [הוא אצלוינו לפ[נ]י] ראש
שנה ורצוני שיצא עצ' כח מן המלכות יגוננה אל לח[ק]
את ידו ממחזרתי הריב וכל העם אל מקומו יבא בשלום
15 וכל רצוני שיצא ביד רמה וקרן זקופה לשבר מותלוות עז
כי לבוי כאב עמי למאור ואני יכולת לנצח כל מה שבלבבי
ונ[ש]י[א]נו ירום יקרו יהוה לפ[נ]יו כל הדרבים ועינ' יד דרך
מצפה⁸ לביאת כתב ביציאתו ממצרים והוא יעש' בחסדו צור
ישמע ת[פ]לתי בעדו ובعد האח הארון תפארת בית יש[ר]אל
20 וחמודיהם וכל המשפחה להמציאם חן ושכל טוב בעני
אליהם ואדם ושלם ושלם כבورو וIALIZED מיא[ר] . . .
שלמה הנרכה ברבי יהודה נז'

⁵ The italics are mine.

⁶ Read העישה.

⁷ Read our leader; for this word see *JQR.*, N. S., 1X, p. 158, note 141.

⁸ Cp. 1 Sam. 4. 3.

We learn from this letter several details of interest. In the first instance we see that Daniel b. 'Azarya was not the first Nasi in the Holy Land, but that already in Solomon's time a descendant of David settled there. (This Nasi is indeed mentioned in some other epistles of the Gaon.) Unfortunately his name is not preserved in our fragment, of which the beginning is missing. Solomon writes that he is very pleased that the Nasi intends leaving Egypt for Palestine, where he will be the leader of the people. The Gaon has already written to the Ḥaber (probably Ephraim b. Shemarya) setting forth how the division of authority (in Jerusalem) was to be arranged so that no friction arise between himself and the newcomer. (Our fragment is not written to Ephraim but to some other person in Fustāt, very likely Sahlān b. Abraham, because in l. 21 greetings are sent to the correspondent and his son. In the numerous letters to Ephraim there is never mentioned a son of his, only a son-in-law, Joseph by name.) The Gaon continues: I have spoken to-day (in Jerusalem) to the important elder, Sa'adya b. Israel, to write to 'our lord and leader, the elder and the glory of the house of Israel', informing him of my love for the Nasi, and my desire for his settling here. He deserves all honour. The time is pressing because the festivals are at hand, and I want him to be with us (in Jerusalem) before New Year. Let him obtain letters patent from the (central) government to be able to act here with authority, and put an end to the rampant strife of which the Gaon had enough. 'Our Nasi will tell him (i. e. this great dignitary) all the details.' (It seems that the Nasi had already visited the Holy City, and was well acquainted with the local state of affairs.) I am anxiously expecting a letter reporting his (the Nasi's) departure from Egypt. 'He (this dignitary) will do it in his kindness' (i. e. obtain from the government in Cairo (Fustāt) a decree of authority for the Nasi). May God hear my prayers for him, for (his) brother, 'the glory of the house of Israel', and their noble family. Let me state that these two brothers are the above-mentioned Abū Sa'ad and Abū Naṣr, who were the very people to obtain from the Caliph all the political power

required by the Nasi for his new régime in Jerusalem. This is the plain and obvious meaning of our fragment. What ground, then, had Dr. Marmorstein for his statement quoted above?

6. Dr. Marmorstein has found in several Genizah fragments (pp. 20 ff.) references to the formidable revolution in Palestine and Syria (1024–29) against the Caliph az-Zāhir. It should be stated at once that one leader of the rebels, Ḥasan, was not of the Banū Gariah, as Dr. Marmorstein prints, but of the Banū Jarrah (جراح, see Becker, *Beiträge z. Gesch. Ägyptens unter d. Islam*, I, pp. 44 ff.). Furthermore, the Resh Kalla Sahlān b. Abraham resided not in Kairowan but in Fustāṭ, as is clear from numerous fragments (see also my remarks in *JQR.*, N. S., IX, p. 161; the residence of Sahlān's father, Abraham, in Fustāṭ is also evident from the Arabic address, *JQR.*, XIX, 726, no. 11). But Dr. Marmorstein has discovered in T.-S., 13 J. 13²⁸ that Jews in Damascus were imprisoned for taking part in the rebellion. Accordingly Solomon b. Judah (to wit, in Jerusalem) writes to Suhlān b. Abraham (in Kairowan (!), according to Dr. Marmorstein) to inspire 'the Resh Kalla to take steps with the authorities on behalf of the Jewish prisoners in Damascus' (pp. 20–21). What a play with geography! To release prisoners in Damascus naturally the central Fāṭimid government in Cairo had to be approached. What help could the Gaon in Jerusalem hope to obtain for them from the intervention with the authorities (in Kairowan !) by the local Resh Kalla? But the letter was addressed to Fustāṭ, and has nothing to do with the rebellion.

Before briefly indicating its drift, I give the following corrected readings. The fragment is of paper, square writing, size 25.5 x 17.4 cm., badly preserved, torn at the bottom of the left-hand side. Its beginning is intact. Hence the dots by Dr. Marmorstein (note 30, before l. 1) should be deleted. In l. 2 for אל יידי read אל נשלחו . . . והיינו . . . והחומר, (l. 3) for read והחומרנו, (l. 6) for read אל יידי read ונחתוק, (l. 9) for read ונחתוק ונשלחו צי[ר]ים והי[נו] read אלקזאי, (l. 11) for read אלקזאי, (l. 12) for read בזולח ארץ, (l. 13) for read בזולח בזולח[נו] נשב לפ[י] חפיתק [זהה] מפי הפיתק מפי (l. 14) בזולח[נו]

⁹ is an uncle from the maternal side in contrast to דוד. Sec, e.g., ווי יהודה בן קורייש אמר כי דודו אחיו ואמרפו: Ibn Ezra to Amos 6. 10. Sahlān's maternal uncle was a scholar by name Sa'adya b. Ephraim, as will be shown elsewhere.

¹⁰ The perpendicular strokes indicate the lines of the margin.

מר רב | [וְ] פָתָר אֶחָינוּ | מֶרֶב יַעֲקֹב | [שְׁנָצָר] וְאֶל מֶרֶב | נְתָנָאֵל תְּהִכָּנוּ | יְחִיד הַמִּקְוָם | יְעֹזֵר אֶתְכֶם | וַיְוִרִיכָם [סְ] דָרְךָ הַיְשָׁרָה | וַיְצַלְּחָכֶם בְּכָל | אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשׂו | וַעֲקָב שְׁלוֹם | שְׁלָמָה In the addition between ll. 27–8 read *הַחֲבָרִים* after *וְכֵן*. So much for the correctness of Dr. Marmorstein's copy!

As regards the subject-matter of the letter, it deals with a communal dispute between Rabbinites and Karaites. (Several other fragments have a bearing on this episode. They will be printed in another connexion.) The latter used to be under the jurisdiction of the former. But in 1024 the Caliph issued a decree that independence in religious matters be granted to each sect. The commander-in-chief in Syria was ordered to carry out this edict also in his province. From 1024–9 affairs were chaotic there owing to the rebellion, and this Act of Tolerance could not be carried out. But with the restoration of order it began to take effect. (This is a summary of my construction of the data to be given elsewhere.) Now certain scholars of the Palestine school (חֲבָרִים, Dr. Marmorstein translates 'partners'!) seem to have contravened in Ramlah this Government Act, were arrested and taken to Damascus, where the commander-in-chief ad-Dizbiri probably resided then. 'Adi b. Menasse (b. al-Kzāz) was an important *Jewish* Kātib in this city. No doubt acting in an official capacity, he informed the prisoners that they would be released on condition that they took an oath by God and the Caliph no more to use the title Ḥaber, and never again to hold any communal office in Palestine. The Karaites came in with other demands that a separate shop be assigned to them in the Jewish bazaar where meat be sold to them which was not examined in the Rabbinic way (*בְּדִיקָה*), that they should be allowed to trade on the festival days fixed by the Rabbinites, and other instances. Solomon b. Judah writes to Sahlān to obtain influential support in Fustāt (Cairo) for the cause of the Rabbinites; let the central government be induced to send word to Ramlah and Damascus in their favour. The Gaon energetically appealed to other influential Jews in Fustāt. It should be added that ultimately the Rabbinites had the better

of their opponents. The whole subject cannot be fully discussed here. But one thing is beyond doubt, that our letter has no bearing whatever on the rebellion of 1024-9.

But, writes Dr. Marmorstein (p. 23), '*If there were the slightest doubt about the dating of the letters*, one other fragment shows *undeniably*¹¹ that the revolution took place in the time of Solomon, and furthermore that it had a very sad influence on the Jews in those countries'. Nobody denies this. There are some Genizah fragments which tell us a good deal about the terrible sufferings of the Jews in Jerusalem and Ramlah during the rebellion. But the fragment T.-S., 13 J. 20²⁵, which Dr. Marmorstein adduces as evidence (note 32), has nothing whatever to do with this crisis. He has discovered therein a tribal prince **יבקִי בֶן אַבְרָהָן** and also the Banū Guriah (כָּנִי גָּבְירָה). Thus by some strange way of transliteration the Banū Jarrah (above, p. 417) become in MS. Banū Gariah, Banū Guriah, בָּנִי גָּבְירָה. But the MS. reads (l. 15) בָּנִי גָּבְרָה (vocalized in the original!). Thus: '.... a letter from Mukhtar the Arab, and he said that my son Jabarah sent'! (Another fragment has expressly **גָּבְרָה בֶן מְכַתָּאֵר**, בָּקִי, had Dr. Marmorstein considered the letter, dated Kislev (1) 340 Sel. (= 1028), from Alexandria to Ephraim b. Shemaria (*JQR.*, XIX, 250-4), he would have found that the 'noble' **יבקִי** plied the honourable trade of slave-dealer. His relatives and trade-fellows were Mukhtar (mentioned in *JQR.*, *l. c.*, and in our fragment, l. 1) and his son Jabarah. Saracen pirates infested in those days the eastern Mediterranean, and boat loads of captives from Byzantium were landed at the Egyptian ports, chiefly Alexandria. Several other Genizah fragments of this time mention Jewish captives from Byzantium whom their Egyptian co-religionists had to ransom. And our letter here is one of these fragments. It probably does not emanate from Alexandria, where the most representative Jew then was Netaneel Hakkohen b. El'azar, but from some other Egyptian port, probably Damietta. An elder, Nathan Hakkohen, negotiates with the captors about the ransom of the Jews. Some of the captives were also sent

¹¹ The italics are mine.

to Barkah (l. 16), farther west on the North-African coast. (There is no ground whatever for identifying this Nathan Hakkohen with a Nathan הַחֶבֶר (no Kohen!) in Fustat, mentioned in Solomon b. Juda's letter to Ephraim b. Shemarya, Saadyana, XLI, as Dr. Marmorstein does.)

In conclusion, the following corrected readings of the fragment are given here. It is torn across the whole right-hand side. Thus dots, indicating missing letters, should be placed at the beginning of each line. The length of a whole line can be estimated from l. 11. In l. 1 for קחה read לוקחה, for לו קחה אבוריין (l. 3) for עניינים (l. 4) for חתן? supply read הוּא, (l. 6) for יוננה, (l. 8) for ליליה, (l. 9) for ישוה, (l. 10) for ילבו, (l. 12) for קדוש, (l. 13) for נבארה, (l. 15) for רצלה, (l. 17) for אחרי, (l. 18) for ר' ר' ר' ר' (l. 19) for תשנחת (?), (l. 20) read דלותם, (l. 21) before עבורה only the last word אליה[ם] is preserved.

The moral of the above strictures is obvious. The facts speak for themselves. Needless to say, history—worthy of the name—cannot be reconstrued by such a method.

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